

## Aharon Cizling-A Brief Biography & Quotes

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**BASED** On Declassified Israeli Documents & Personal Diaries

### 1901-1964

Aharon Cizling (Zisling) was born in Russia in 1901, and became Israel's Agriculture Minister in 1948-49. Cizling was one of two influential members of the Mapam party to join the first Israeli Cabinet, who also was a member of [Ein Howd](#) Kibbutz, 14 km south of [Haifa](#). In the early days of the "Jewish state", the Mapam party reflected a bizarre mixture of military activism, verging on expansionism, and a deep commitment to Jewish-Arab co-existence in peace. They also advocated that Israel should occupy the West Bank from ([H.M. The King Abdullah](#)) of Jordan and to established a "friendly" Palestinian state.

As it will be concluded from the quotes below, Cizling was among a handful of Zionists who displayed some empathy with th Palestinian [DISPOSSESSION](#).

### Sources

- [1949, The First Israelis](#), p. 20
- [Benny Morris](#), p. 302

### Famous Quotes

During the course of the 1948 war, reports of [WAR CRIMES](#) (perpetrated by the Israeli soldiers at al-Dawayima northwest of Hebron) reached the Israeli Cabinet. These atrocities shocked Aharon Cizling, and during a Cabinet meeting he stated:

"I've received a letter on the subject. I must say that I have known what things have been like for some time and I have raised the issue several times already here. However after reading this letter I couldn't sleep last night. I felt the things that were going on were hurting my soul, the soul of my family and all of us here. I could not imagine where we came from and to where are we going. . . . I often disagree when the term Nazi was applied to the British. I wouldn't like to use the term, even though the British committed Nazi crimes. But now Jews too have behaved like Nazis and my entire being has been shaken. . . . Obviously we have to conceal these actions from the public, and I agree that we should not even reveal that we're investigating them. But they must be investigated. . . ." ([1949, The First Israelis](#), p. 26 & [Benny Morris](#), p. 233)

Aharon Cizling empathized with the plight of the Palestinian refugees. He said during a Cabinet meeting:

"We still do not properly appreciate what kind of enemy we are now nurturing outside the borders of our state. Our enemies, the Arab states, are mere nothing compared with those hundreds of thousands of [Palestinian] Arabs who will be moved by hatred and hopelessness and infinite hostility to wage war on us, regardless of any agreement we might be reached. . . ." ([1949, The First Israelis](#), p. 31)

The common view (which has gripped Israel since its inception) that Arabs could only appreciate the language of force, and any other forms of communication would be interpreted as weakness. [Click here](#) to read our response to this argument.

On June 16 1948 Aharon Cizling spoke at length about the destruction of the Palestinian villages in a cabinet meeting :

"[Destruction of a site during battle] is one thing. But [if a site is destroyed] a month later, in cold blood, out of political calculation . . . that is another thing altogether . . . This course [of destroying villages] will not reduce the number of [Palestinian] Arabs who will return to the Land of Israel. It will [only] increase the number of [our] enemies." ([Benny Morris](#), p. 163)

On the same day he cautioned the Israeli cabinet (a few weeks after the expulsion [Lydda's](#) and [Ramla's](#) inhabitants):

"We are embarking on a course that will most greatly endanger any hope of peaceful alliance with forces who could be our allies in the Middle East .... Hundreds of thousands of [Palestinian] Arabs who will be evicted from Palestine, even if they are to blame, and left hanging in the midair, will grow to hate us. If you do things in the heat of the war, in the midst of the battle, it's one thing. But if after a month, you do it in cold blood, for political reason, in public, that is something altogether different. And I'm speaking now not only of moral considerations but also of political considerations." ([Simha Flapan](#), p. 110 & [Expulsion Of The Palestinians](#), p. 191)

And on the same subject, he also said during a Cabinet meeting:

"I have to say that this phrase [regarding the treatment of Ramla's inhabitants] is a subtle order to [EXPEL](#) the [Palestinian] Arabs from Ramla. If I'd receive such an order this is how I would interpret it. An order given during the conquest which states that the door is open and that all [Palestinian] Arabs may leave, regardless of age, and sex, or they may stay, however, the army will not be responsible for providing food. When such things are said during actual conquest, at the moment of conquest, and after all that has already happened in [Jaffa](#) and other places. . . . I would interpret it as a warning: save yourself while you can get out." ([1949, The First Israelis](#), p. 27)

And also went on to describe his dismay at the [LOOTING](#) of Ramla City (ironically, not at for raping Palestinian women). He said:

". ..It's been said that . 'there were cases of rape in Ramla. I can forgive rape, but I will not forgive other acts which seem to me much worse. When they enter a town and forcibly remove rings from the fingers and jewelry from someone's neck, that's a very grave matter. ... Many are guilty of it." ([1949, The First Israelis](#), p. 71-72)

Aharon Cizling wrote [Ben-Gurion](#) of the looting frenzy which gripped Israelis (civilians and soldiers):

"Again and again in our meetings we discuss the issue of the abandoned property. Everyone expresses shock, bitterness and shame, but we have yet to find a solution. ..up to now we have dealt with individual looters, both soldiers and civilians. Now, however, there are more and more reports about acts which, judging by their nature and extent, could only have been carried out by (government) order. I ask. ..on what basis was the order given (I hear it has been held back to dismantle all the water pumps in the Arab orange groves). ...If there is any foundation to the reports which have reached me, the responsibility rests with a government agency....Meanwhile, private plundering still goes on, too." ([1949, The First Israelis](#), p. 73-74)

In the latter half of 1948, the settlement department of the Jewish Agency prepared a list of several dozen Arab villages which it proposed to repopulate with new immigrants. Most of the villages had been emptied of their Palestinian owners, but a few were not quite empty. Some were destined to be demolished and their lands to be used for new settlements. Some of the Cabinet ministers criticized the army for demolishing some of the villages it occupied. The subject was brought up time after time by Ministers Shitrit, Bentov and Cizling.

"As I travel about I hear rumors about the destruction of property and I should like to know who gave the order to do this," said Cizling at one meeting. "I was in Beit Shean and was told by people I trust that the any commander had received an order to destroy the place. ...These are facts about villages which I have seen destroyed. In the Hefer Valley I saw Arab villages which had been

abandoned by their inhabitants and were not destroyed during the campaign. Now they are in ruins and whoever did it should be called upon to explain. ..." Ben-Gurion replied: "When you say Beit Shean, that is a particular place. But when you mention generally 'ruined villages'-I can't send people to look for ruined villages." Cizling asked: "Who destroyed the village of [Cherkass](#) in the Hefer Valley? At an earlier meeting I mentioned Moussa Goldenberg who reported an order to DESTROY 40 villages and named you, as the source of that order. I stated then that I did not believe it was really done in your name. I am not speaking now about the political aspect, but about things which seem to be happening by themselves, without control. Even if I agreed with a certain act-I wouldn't accept it being done by itself." ([1949, The First Israelis](#), p. 84)

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